

# What's Wrong with MCA?

What happens when charter schools are given  
unlimited power and no accountability

Joe Baird  
11/8/2018

# Overview

On June 4th, 2018, I filed a complaint against Mason Classical Academy with the Inspector General's office for the Florida Department of Education. My original complaints were related to financial mismanagement and possible Sunshine Law violations. Since that time, I have gathered additional information which further substantiates those complaints and further implicates the board of directors and administration of MCA.

In my original [complaint to the DOE](#), I voiced the following concerns:

1. Board president allowed the principal to obstruct treasurer's access to expense reports
2. Board conspired with the principal to block the formation of a Financial Oversight Committee in order to avoid oversight
3. Board refused to allow treasurer access to information required to verify enrollment numbers reported to the district while knowing that this exposed the treasurer personally to financial ruin
4. Board allows principal to appoint board members and refuses to hold him accountable for anything
5. Sunshine Law violations

Here is a list of shady and / or dubious practices I have uncovered since then:

6. Destruction of public records with intent to cover up dubious business practices
7. Falsification of documents with intent to cover up the cover up
8. Illegal conflict of interest between the president and the principal
9. Unethical conflict of interest between the principal and a staff member
10. Board members ignore these conflicts of interest
11. Illegal board meeting on 6/30/2018
12. School is operating without an approved budget
13. Board ignored complaint regarding retaliatory threat against a student
14. Board ignored complaint about offensive Facebook post from board member
15. Board threatened a lawsuit in response to both complaints
16. Board and principal do not hold employees accountable for using grotesque language in publicly insulting news reporter

In the sections that follow I will provide proof, evidence and arguments to support all of these allegations.

# Motives

I believe I owe the general public an explanation as to the reasons behind my actions. The first and most important thing that should be known is that I am a firm believer in charter schools, classical education, and Hillsdale. I strongly support the MCA mission and sincerely hope to see the school succeed under new leadership. Every action I take is done with the school's best interest at heart. My intent is to put an end to the harm that has been inflicted on the school by the present board of directors and administration. This is an attempt to bring transparency and accountability to the administration and board, to end the abuse and maltreatment of students, teachers and parents, and to restore true classical education to MCA.

Consider this to be a final plea to the Collier County School Board, the Department of Education, and to Hillsdale to please wake up to the dozens and dozens of complaints voiced by families and teachers throughout the years that to date have gone unaddressed. In revealing the shady and dubious practices listed above, I am attempting to show that the board and administration of MCA are not the virtuous leaders they pretend to be. Nor does the board have any desire or ability to influence or govern the administration. On the contrary, the administration runs both the school and the board, and this unchecked power has caused incalculable damage to many children, teachers, families, and parents. Those who have gone to the board with their complaints or problems have been dismissed since in the eyes of the board the administration can do no wrong. In taking these complaints to the Collier County School Board, the Department of Education, and Hillsdale, these good people have been referred back to the MCA board only to have their grievances ignored again. Frustrated, most completely gave up and in many cases were persecuted for daring to question the administration.

It is my hope that in bringing to light some of the very questionable and even illegal practices going on within the school that the appropriate authorities will not only hold the board and administration accountable for their actions, but also take steps to ensure that future charter schools are not permitted to operate without an effective grievance process for parents and teachers. The board needs to be held accountable just as much as the administration.

# The Original Complaint

Below are links to the original complaint I filed with the DOE on 6/4/2018.

Here is the official document:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1bNzpYnCCqnnJVu3x7AOqDXsl8LwtmsTB>

Here is an easier to read version of the same information:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rzk8hkZ\\_Bp8lWFYHDCIF1zDUQShe\\_mNISQ2PC3CAQFk](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rzk8hkZ_Bp8lWFYHDCIF1zDUQShe_mNISQ2PC3CAQFk)

## Records Tampering and Falsification of Documents

***Honesty:** We never knowingly induce another to believe what is false.  
We are always truthful in what we say and do, regardless of the  
circumstances or consequences.*

It is a provable fact that someone at MCA deleted public records which contained incriminating evidence that corroborated some of the complaints I filed with the DOE. The Board of Directors, through a statement from their attorney, also lied when they stated that they were not in possession of these documents, and then provided falsified documents in response to a public records request in order to cover up their lie. Whether the documents were deleted by the administration or a board member is yet to be discovered. The same can be said for the falsified documents. However, it is certain that the board has full knowledge of this and has done nothing.

### Deleting Public Records

During my time as Treasurer of MCA, I uploaded a number of files to MCA's Google Drive for discussion at the 10/4/2016 MCA Board of Directors meeting. I placed these files in a folder designated for all documents related to that meeting. These documents are all public record and contain incriminating evidence that corroborates some of the complaints I filed with the Department of Education. They show the following:

1. I had complained to the MCA board that the school's administration was hampering my ability to review their financial records. The [Treasurer's report](#) contains the following statement which is why I believe this file was deleted - to hide this statement from the public and also possibly future investors:

"I have been prevented from completing my examination of the financial and bank statements for August 2016 due to management's failure to provide pertinent information I have requested. I will complete my investigation upon receipt of this information."

2. I had recruited many candidates to serve on the Financial Oversight Committee, and I had come to that meeting prepared to vote on which candidates would serve as

members on this committee. The directory containing all of this information can be viewed here:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1UEKcMXdjXVaGgTnLiydSyincajDcKCQc>

I believe these documents were deleted from the school's drive deliberately, firstly, in order to prevent the public from ever knowing that I had voiced a complaint to the board about obstruction from the administration, and secondly, that they had blocked my efforts to form a Financial Oversight Committee.

I will not explain here how the administration tried to block me from performing my duties as a treasurer, or how Kelly Lichter, Laura Miller and David Hull conspired to block the formation of this committee. This has been explained at length in the actual complaint I filed with the DOE. It can be found [here](#).

On August 13th, 2018, I made a public records request for all documents distributed among board members for the 10/4/2016 MCA board meeting. Chuck Marshall provided most of these documents in response; however, he did not provide me with a copy of the Treasurer's report that I had submitted, and he did not provide me with a copy of the resumés of applicants or any of the other information in the link provided above.

When I pointed this out to Chuck Marshall, he had the technology team search again, and eventually told me that I most likely had never uploaded those documents in the first place. I know this to be false, and I am certain that Chuck does as well (proof to follow). I believe he was simply trying to cover up the fact that someone had deleted them.

The email exchange between me and Chuck Marshall can be seen here:

[https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Y46nP2e7enPIbztloQR71Wd\\_PaDX8xYj](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Y46nP2e7enPIbztloQR71Wd_PaDX8xYj)

## Lying and Falsification of Documents

On October 24, 2018 I sent an email to the entire MCA board of directors informing them of the missing documents. I explained that I thought they could be subject to a Sunshine Law violation, and I pointed out that if those documents contained incriminating evidence, then it might be viewed as tampering with public records as part of a cover up. I asked them to perform a thorough and far reaching investigation into the activity on the Google Drive to discover what happened to those documents. Every single board member has access to that folder on the Google Drive and can see the activity log. I pointed out to them that the activity log shows every time someone uploads a file, edits a file, or deletes a file. I think it's safe to assume at this point that all board members saw the activity log, they know the documents were deleted, and they know who did it. Yet they have done nothing about it.

Here is a link to that email proving that I made them aware of the situation and asked for an investigation:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1gmCDY4JbzUi-zyoYMn8GhwxwBIGYfn5NA>

On October 26, 2018 I received an email from Shawn Arnold, MCA's attorney, stating that they could not find the documents in question. He asked for additional information to help them in their search. In my response to Shawn Arnold, I provided the exact names of every file I was looking for along with the date it was uploaded to the Google Drive. One of the files I specifically requested was a file named "YahairaMagee - resume.docx". This is important because this is the document that proves my case. I also provided their attorney with the following information as evidence that those documents existed on the Google Drive prior to the 10/4/2016 board meeting:

- **Meeting minutes of the 10/4/2016 board meeting.** These minutes were unanimously approved by all board members, and they clearly show that there was a Treasurer's report submitted in writing.  
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1aQZAJBS3K8E-5b0AkamjZY9uo9N97SDg>
- **Meeting agenda for the 10/4/2016 board meeting.** This agenda clearly shows that the board was going to approve members to the Finance Oversight Committee at that meeting (see agenda item 4C).  
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Yi-PSH5Apm0itidpRIR82OuZYCNIV7EP>
- **Email to the board from 9/23/2016** which shows I had uploaded applications for all applicants for the Financial Oversight Committee. I also asked board members to review these applications and interview them as needed.  
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1rNU7bOHw7KrogP-3MR4iELeNi74UkkDz>
- **Email to the board from 10/2/2016** which shows I had uploaded a statement of the Finance Oversight Committee's purpose for discussion.  
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1F7L3pnmw0aOUYewn4Jmd3ThbTERi5hq>
- **Email to the board from 10/3/2016** which shows I had uploaded the Treasurer's report.  
[https://drive.google.com/open?id=16diyGXAVPuz--1leGt8W6VmolsOpUR1\\_](https://drive.google.com/open?id=16diyGXAVPuz--1leGt8W6VmolsOpUR1_)

Later that day I decided to make another public records request for screenshots of the entire activity log for the Google Drive folder containing all of the documents pertaining to the 10/4/2016 board meeting.

On 10/29/2018 I received a [response from Shawn Arnold](#) stating clearly that "The School is not in possession of any other documents." This was a lie as was shown later by the fact that the school eventually produced these documents (most likely after they had a little time to think

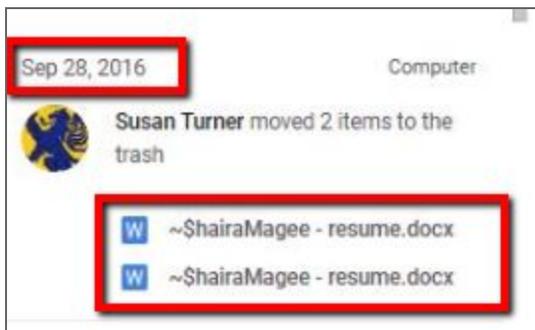
about the seriousness of what they had done). In this same email from Shawn Arnold, he provided me with 9 screenshots showing the activity log of their Google Drive. Those screenshots can be viewed here:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/127loHAX3MLhv4cX8Xo887yJNKDfd\\_o39](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/127loHAX3MLhv4cX8Xo887yJNKDfd_o39)

All of the screenshots clearly show that the files I uploaded to Google Drive never existed on that drive. There is no doubt that the Activity Log sent to me by MCA's attorney was tampered with in some way because whoever did the tampering made one fatal error. That person neglected to delete one small entry in the fifth screenshot:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Hqo9PK5oCZu-hm-aHy3OckhRVTvi22uc/view>

Here is the entry:



This is quite troubling because it shows that Susan Turner deleted a file named “~\$hairaMagee - resume.docx”; however, in the screenshots provided by MCA, there is no record showing that this file was ever uploaded to the Google Drive. How can a file that was never uploaded be deleted?

The file I had requested was named “YahairaMagee - resume.docx”, and I was told this file did not exist. The file in the activity log above has a very similar name: “~\$hairaMagee - resume.docx”. The presence of “~\$hairaMagee - resume.docx” on their Google Drive proves that the file named “YahairaMagee - resume.docx” must have also existed on the Google Drive at the same time.

*For those who would like to see a detailed explanation of how the presence of “~\$hairaMagee - resume.docx” proves the existence of “YahairaMagee - resume.docx”, please see the section later in this document entitled [Detailed explanation of “~\\$hairaMagee - resume.docx”](#)*

The point is that Susan Turner had the supposedly “non-existent” file in her possession on 9/28/2016 and that it was on MCA's Google Drive. Yet that file is not there today. That means someone deleted it. Interestingly, this deletion does not appear in the activity log. Since Google Drive shows all activity of files added, edited and deleted, there should be a record of it. Where is it? It is gone. Erased. The only way this can be explained is if someone falsified the activity log that they provided.

They had to falsify the log because they didn't want to show the true record that the files were deleted. Showing the complete log would not only show this, it would also show who did it and when.

On 10/30/2018, I received an [email from Shawn Arnold](#) with the requested documents attached. The email stated the following:

Mason's outside IT support was able to locate the requested records on an archive disk. This should resolve all outstanding public records requests from Mr. Baird.

I believe they finally sent me the documents because they realized that what they were doing was illegal and quite possibly a felony. I think they were hoping that giving me the requested documents would shut me up and cause me not to look too closely at the falsified activity log that they had provided. However, their delivery of the requested documents makes the case against MCA even stronger. First, it proves that they were in possession of the documents all along. Second, it raises additional questions. How did those files get onto an archive disk without leaving any traces on the Google Drive? Who is "Mason's outside IT support?" Why were they able to "recover" these files when MCA's internal technology team was unable to do so? I think all of these questions need to be answered.

I think it bears pointing out again that regardless of who actually deleted or tampered with documents, the entire MCA board is complicit to some degree. I notified the board of the situation of the missing documents on 10/24/2018 and I directed them to look at the Google Drive activity log. They all had access to this log and ample time to review it. Nevertheless, on 10/29/2018 I received a statement from their attorney affirming that they were not in possession of these documents along with falsified screenshots of the Google Drive activity log. I don't see any way to view this other than that the board cooperated in the deleting and falsification of public records.

## The Board Doubles Down

To make matters worse, on 11/1/2018, I sent a follow up email to the entire board and a few members of the administration. I explained to them that the activity log they had provided me was incomplete. I pointed out the presence of the "~\$hairaMagee - resume.docx" file and showed how it's presence indicated that certain parts of the log were missing. I asked them to review what they had sent me and to send me whatever they had failed to send the first time. I was trying to delicately point out that they had provided me proof that they were lying and had falsified information and giving them an opportunity to correct the situation. I did not receive a response. On 11/5/2018, I forwarded that email to my attorney and asked him to send it to MCA's attorney to ensure that it was dealt with appropriately. Instead of coming clean and

sending me the information I had requested, they doubled down on the lie. Their lawyer sent this response on 11/5/2018:

“In response to the “Google Drive” issue that Mr. Baird is discussing, all documents were included in the response. Mr. Baird should review the records again.”

This proves that the entire board was notified (although delicately) that the records had been falsified and a full copy of the activity log was requested. Their response was to tell me that they had already sent me everything. This proves beyond any reasonable doubt that the entire board of directors is complicit in the cover up.

Here is a copy of the email that was forwarded to MCA’s attorney:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1PP3E8QiLi9EBc4FZ3g4TUP9ZYPfurd3>

Here is a copy of the attorney’s response:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1TANMDsCedPmXOY3m9FwOjDPJ6zQBrFj4>

***If they are willing to delete such inconsequential information and then lie about it and falsify documents to cover it up, what else might they be hiding?***

## Hiding Reports from the Public

The deletion of the documents I had requested is neither an isolated case nor accidental. It is intentional and calculated and done in order to hide information from the public.

When I joined the MCA board David Hull with Kelly Lichter’s cooperation told me that they were going to begin the practice of submitting their officer’s reports to each other in writing rather than orally in the public meetings. David Hull specifically stated that the purpose of this practice was so that these items would not be discussed in public where parents and news reporters could hear them.

According to the [meeting minutes from the 10/4/2016 board meeting](#), there were two reports submitted in writing:

- [The Treasurer’s Report](#)
- [The Principal’s Report](#)

On August 13, 2018, when I made a public records request for all documents related to the 10/4/2016 board meeting, these two documents were missing in the documents provided to me by Chuck Marshall. I pointed this out to Chuck Marshall, [and he responded by stating:](#)

“According to the minutes, none of these items were reviewed at the meeting. Thus, they are not included as supporting documents.”

Chuck Marshall's statements corroborate the complaint with the DOE. He is stating that these items were not discussed at the meeting (because they were submitted in writing), and therefore he sees no need to hand them over. He did eventually send me a copy of the Principal's report on 8/15/2018.

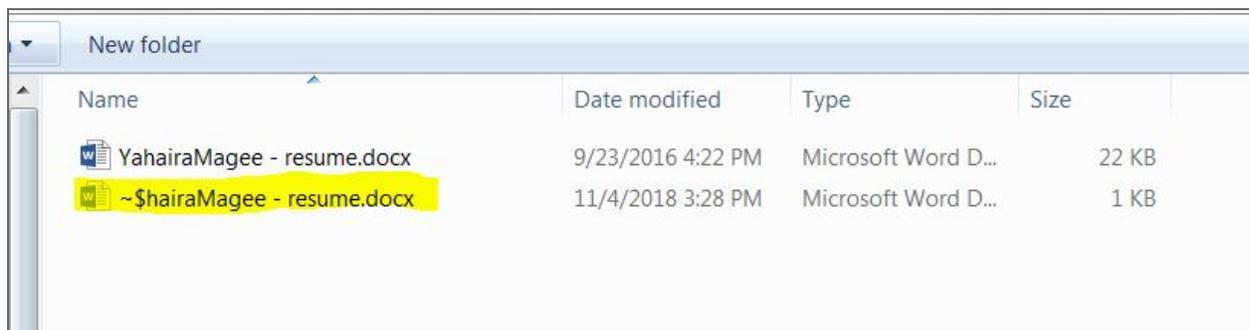
Additionally, the principal's report was on the Google Drive prior to the 10/4/2016 board meeting. I know it was there because I saw the report. I remember it well because Mr. Hull spent a great deal of time talking about dress code violations, and this was exactly the sort of discussion that Dr. Carpenter had recommended should not be discussed at board meetings. The Google Drive Activity Log provided to me shows no trace of this file having existed prior to 8/15/2018 - the same day that Chuck Marshall sent me a copy (the file is named 'BoardReport\_10416.pdf'). This was nearly two years after that board meeting. Why was that file not on the Google Drive in 2016? Where did Chuck Marshall find a copy of it? Were the other missing documents also in that same location? Why did he suddenly upload it nearly two years later?

This should be alarming to anyone as this implies a careful and systematic attempt by the administration and board of MCA to hide records from the public.

## Detailed explanation of “~\$hairaMagee - resume.docx”

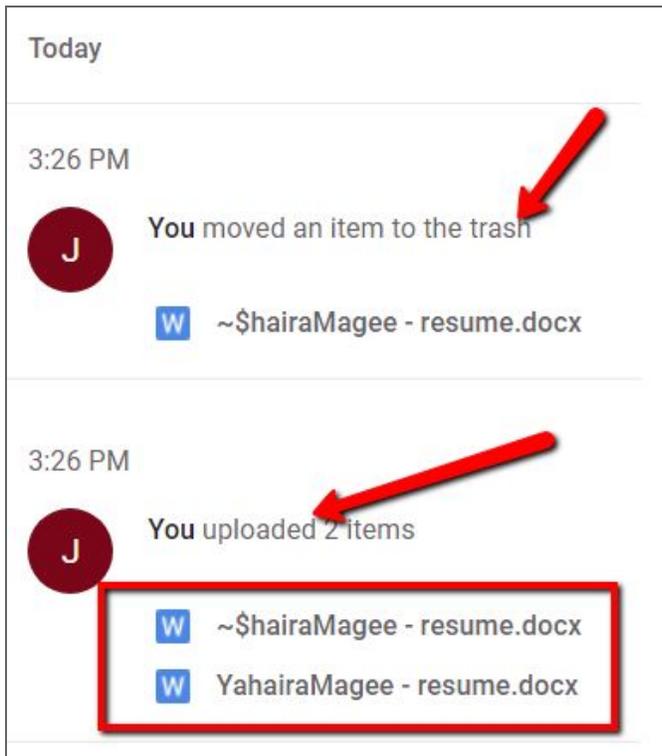
Anytime that someone opens a document using Microsoft Word, a temporary file with a very similar name is automatically created in the same directory as the file being opened. Normally the first one or two characters of the file are changed. In this case, the file named “~\$hairaMagee - resume.docx” was the temporary file created when Susan Turner opened the document named “YahairaMagee - resume.docx”.

To illustrate this point, please see the image below where I placed a copy of “YahairaMagee - resume.docx” on my own computer and then opened it with Microsoft Word. When I did that, the file named “~\$hairaMagee - resume.docx” was created automatically in the same folder by Microsoft Word like this:

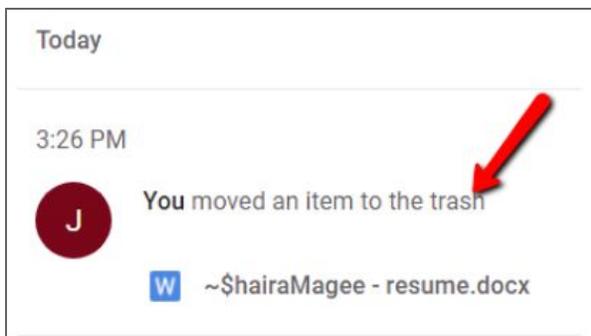


When I closed Microsoft Word, the temporary file was deleted automatically from my hard drive.

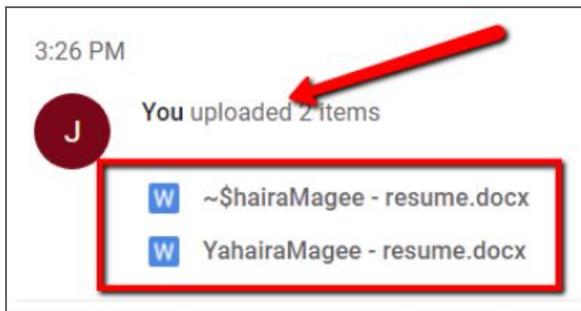
When I looked at my own Google Drive activity log after opening and closing this file in Microsoft Word, the activity log looked like this:



In order for this entry to occur,



This entry must have occurred prior:



This is how the MCA activity log should appear, but it does not. It only shows the deletion of “~\$hairaMagee - resume.docx”, but nothing related to its creation or to the existence of “YahairaMagee - resume.docx”.

Susan Turner has the Google Drive synchronization application installed on her local computer, so files that she saves to certain folders automatically get uploaded to the Google Drive. It also means that files uploaded by others are automatically downloaded to her hard drive. This is how she came to be in possession of the “YahairaMagee - resume.docx” file. I uploaded it to MCA’s Google Drive in 2016 and it was automatically downloaded to Susan Turner’s computer. When she opened that file in Word, the temporary file was created on her local hard drive and automatically uploaded to Google Drive. There is no record in the activity log of the temporary file upload occurring. She then closed the document and the temporary file was deleted from her hard drive, and subsequently removed from the Google Drive. The removal of this file from Google Drive is the only trace that any of these files ever existed. This clearly demonstrates that the file in question existed on MCA’s Google Drive, that it was later deleted, and that the activity log has been falsified to cover it up.

## Conflict of Interest

***Integrity:*** *We are individuals of strong ethical values, who make consistently good choices in keeping with our knowledge of right and wrong. We seek the wisdom of others in cases of moral uncertainty.*

The dishonesty and illegal activities of the board and administration do not end here. On 9/25/2017, Kelly Lichter, David Hull, and Gena Smith formed a private LLC known as CLASSICAL CHARTER MANAGEMENT GROUP, LLC. This resulted in an illegal conflict of

interest between Kelly Lichter and David Hull. It also resulted in an unethical and inappropriate conflict of interest between David Hull and Gena Smith because Gena Smith is David Hull's subordinate and is on MCA's payroll. On 5/29/2018 Kelly Lichter subsequently voted to approve David Hull's evaluation which affected his salary and bonuses. She should have recused herself from this vote due to the conflict of interest, but she did not.

The public records information regarding this LLC can be found [here](#).

It should be noted that the general public did not know of this LLC's existence until October 2018. When the existence of the LLC was made public, the ownership was suddenly changed from Kelly Lichter to Nick Lichter. That of course does nothing to change the past, and it also does not resolve the ongoing conflict of interest.

Their website can be found here: <https://classicalchartergroup.com/>

Here is a permanent link to an Internet archive of their website in case it gets taken down: <https://web.archive.org/web/20180607215041/https://classicalchartergroup.com/>

The meeting minutes from 5/29/2018 showing that Kelly Lichter voted on David Hull's evaluation are here: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1OEDDFqbplu1q9doBs2EXFpy1vwh2XgHG>

All of the board members have been made aware of this LLC, and none to my knowledge has done anything about it. They all appear to look the other way and allow it to continue. No member of the board has ever made any public statements about this.

## Illegal Meeting

***Citizenship:*** *We honor rules and laws and respond to authority in obedience. We give of our time and abilities to serve others. We uphold liberty and social equality through respect for individual differences and knowledge of our democratic system.*

I believe it is also important to point out that on 6/30/2018, the MCA board of directors had an illegal meeting. This is important not only because it violates Sunshine Law, but it also means that MCA is operating without an approved budget.

The meeting minutes are here:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=12T8dqzY7FCJg1itw076LmjM62ra36kX>

Those meeting minutes clearly show that a quorum was not present. Josh Longenecker was absent, and Kelly Lichter attended by phone. That means that Only Laura Miller was physically present. According to Florida statute, physical presence is a requirement for establishing a quorum. They didn't have a quorum, so the meeting was illegal. Kelly Lichter as president of the MCA board and a member of the CCPS school board must know this.

## Operating Without an Approved Budget

**Responsibility:** *We accept obligations related to our own good and the good of others, and we act on those obligations in a manner suitable to their timely and satisfactory fulfillment. We are willingly accountable for what we do and say, and we seek to learn from our mistakes.*

The budget for their current fiscal year (2019) was "approved" at the board meeting on 6/30/2018. As shown above, that meeting was illegal. Therefore, the meeting never happened. This means the budget was never approved. Consequently, they are currently operating without an approved budget.

Incidentally, it bears noting that this budget was "approved" at the 6/30/2016 meeting which occurred at 5:00 PM on a Saturday - 7 hours before the start of the new fiscal year. The meeting lasted 12 minutes. The treasurer was not present. According to the agendas and minutes from all meetings prior to this one, this budget was never a topic of conversation in any meeting prior to 6/30/2016. I think this is reckless. I also think it strongly suggests that there is a significant number of private conversations happening among board members - how else could they approve this budget in 12 minutes without the treasurer and without any prior public discussions unless they had all talked about it and agreed in advance that they were going to approve it? Why would they wait until 7 hours before the start of their fiscal year to have their first and only discussion about the new budget? This budget represents millions of dollars of taxpayer money. This should be incredibly alarming.

## Joe Whitehead

**Respect:** *We regard others and ourselves as deserving of kind and just treatment. Our conduct is considerate and polite. We look for the good in others and demonstrate compassion. Our attitude toward others and their property reflects the way we wish to be treated.*

On 10/6/2018, Joe Whitehead called Annika Hammerschlag a slut and a skank on his public radio show. To make matters worse, a current student at MCA called in to talk on the show, so he made these comment in front of MCA students. Here is a link to the audio clip:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1gpGCF289agEsub8zhD5cSP08Poml5X4W>

The references to "Hammerslut" and "Hammerskank" are quite clear. On 11/5/2016 I sent Joe Whitehead an [email](#) and asked for a public apology. I also forwarded the same [email](#) to the MCA attorney, Shawn Arnold. I have yet to receive a response or hear of a public apology.

The reason I have included this information about Joe Whitehead is to show that the MCA board allows members of its administration to shamelessly disparage others whenever it suits their agenda. In this particular case Joe Whitehead was attempting to disparage Annika Hammerschlag, the reporter that wrote the Naples Daily News article, which revealed my claims of financial mismanagement and breach of Sunshine Law. The board does not hold them accountable for anything in these cases.

## Nick Lichter

Nick Lichter is a co-founder of MCA and the husband of Kelly Lichter, the president of the board. On 10/6/2016, just after I resigned from the board, Nick sent an email to the entire board of directors corroborating the complaints I filed with the DOE on 6/4/2018. This email shows how the board allowed the administration to obstruct my access to the school's financial records. Nick raises rhetorical questions which illustrate that the board had abdicated its responsibilities and allowed the administration to manage the board instead of the other way around. It shows that the board blocked my access to future training with Dr. Carpenter, and he argues that their actions would ultimately jeopardize the school due to the increased risk that comes with this lack of oversight from the board.

Here is the email:

[https://drive.google.com/open?id=19amQdOZdbEWFGP4eocJ2Dcmd5VZ\\_UtTc](https://drive.google.com/open?id=19amQdOZdbEWFGP4eocJ2Dcmd5VZ_UtTc)

Because Nick Lichter is Kelly Lichter's husband as well as a co-founder of the school, his actions are a reflection of the general attitude of the board. Here is his reaction when the Naples Daily News published the recent article reporting on the report I filed with the DOE:



**Nick Lichter**

3 mins ·



Byron Donalds, **Erika B. Donalds** and **Joe Baird** just fucked with the wrong school. BRING IT ON YOU LYING BITCHES!!!



NAPLESNEWS.COM

**Former Mason Classical Academy charter school treasurer alleges financial mismanagement**



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## The Threat Against My Daughter and Bullying from the Board

**Courage:** *We always do what we know to be right despite fear, hardship, and opposition. We resist negative peer pressure, defend our rights and the rights of others, and encourage others to do the same.*

On 8/7/2018, I received a threat which originated from David Hull's personal email account. The threat was aimed at my harming daughter's reputation, and it was clear that the intent was to

frighten me and my wife into silence. It was clearly an act of retaliation for the complaint I filed with the DOE.

I alerted the MCA board of this threat the same day I received it - 8/7/2018. I never heard anything from any of the board members or anyone else for that matter.

The author of the email is unclear. The email shows clearly that it was "From David Hull", but the signatory is "Sabine". I believe that David Hull was the true author or at the very least contributed heavily to its contents. For this reason on 10/17/2018 I asked the board of directors to investigate David Hull's actions in this regard and to take disciplinary measures against him if needed. The board did not respond. Their silence implies support of his actions. This shows that David Hull is permitted to threaten harm to students' reputations in order to silence parents, and the board does nothing about it.

The entire email exchange - including the threat and all communication with the board is here: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1oqHWTTrKqS5QTbrXSeUHZ8bI0hi77Yu1j>

The only response I heard from the board was a threat of their own from their attorney to pursue legal action against me. This time, it was not David Hull attempting to frighten me into silence, it was the entire board speaking through their attorney. Here is the letter I received from their attorney:

[https://drive.google.com/open?id=1qklpZBR8zjh-B1HfnTMKNnETcpUkV\\_lu](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1qklpZBR8zjh-B1HfnTMKNnETcpUkV_lu)

## Laura Miller's Facebook Comment and Further Bullying from the Board

On 10/14/2016 I contacted Laura Miller privately and requested her to remove a comment from Facebook that I thought amounted to public humiliation of a young child and made MCA look bad. I did not make this complaint public because I did not wish to attract unnecessary attention to the comment. When I did not hear back from her, I escalated the request to the board. The board did not respond.

As in the case of the threat against my daughter, the only response I have heard from the board was a threat from their attorney to pursue legal action against me. I believe that one letter was a response to both of my complaints. Here is the link again:

[https://drive.google.com/open?id=1qklpZBR8zjh-B1HfnTMKNnETcpUkV\\_lu](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1qklpZBR8zjh-B1HfnTMKNnETcpUkV_lu)

Here is a link to the emails I sent to Laura Miller and to the board:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1X7yKJaMiRM4IADy8QW3GEV01jdUf5cLn>

The bullying behavior from the board is incredible. They never once attempted to investigate or address my concerns. They simply went straight to their attorney and attempted to use intimidation to silence me.

## Unqualified Treasurer / The Principal Appoints the Board Members

I wholeheartedly agree with both David Hull and Joe Whitehead who have publicly criticized me for my lack of ability as a board member.

On 10/6/2018, Joe Whitehead said on his radio show that [“...a gentleman named Baird who attempted to be a board member..., but it was above his pay grade to be able to function that well...”](#)

On 10/11/2016, David Hull sent an [email to all parents of MCA students](#) in which he stated the following: “He [Josh Longenecker] is the one who replaced the former Treasurer [Joe Baird], and actually knows what he's doing.”. The obvious implication is that I didn't know what I was doing as a treasurer. ([Here](#) is an alternate link to that same email.)

Both Joe Whitehead and David Hull are absolutely correct. I had no experience that would qualify me to be a board member, and absolutely no financial background which would qualify me to function as treasurer. And yet, David Hull and his wife came in secret to my home and asked my wife and me if we would be willing to serve on the board. My wife asked for a clarification regarding which of us he was asking to serve. He replied that either one of us would do. He said he was just looking for someone like Laura Miller who would not give him any trouble, someone who would just show up to meetings and vote.

Kelly Lichter and Laura Miller both voted to confirm me as a board member, and they subsequently appointed me as treasurer.

They knowingly appointed a thoroughly unqualified treasurer to the board, and they expect the rest of the world to believe that the school's finances are well managed and subject to proper oversight.

In that same email, David Hull lists the qualifications of the current treasurer as follows:

“That board member is a man of vast educational and leadership experience; a loving husband; a father of 4 biological children; and he recently adopted three other children.”

I suppose by that line of reasoning I would be the more qualified treasurer because I have 11 children. However, there is something more disturbing that needs to be pointed out about this email. Why is the principal of MCA defending the qualifications of the Treasurer? Isn't this a little bit backwards? Shouldn't it be the other way around? Shouldn't the board be defending the qualifications of their principal? The only reason that David Hull sees the need to defend the Treasurer (who is also his good friend and a fellow principal of a classical school) is because David Hull appointed him to the board - just as he appointed me to the board. David Hull is the one who is really in charge of the entire board. **There is no accountability at MCA for this reason. David Hull can act with impunity and do whatever he wants without any fear of anyone holding him accountable for anything.**

## Obstructing Treasurer's Access to Expense Reports

*Cooperation: We work with others for the good of all involved with a positive attitude. We equitably participate in mutual responsibilities for the completion of shared ends and direct our efforts and attention accordingly.*

In the report I filed with the DOE on 6/4/2016, I alleged that David Hull was enabled by the board to block the treasurer from reviewing expense reports including his own. This can easily be proven from an [email from Kelly Lichter](#) which shows that she was aware of the fact that David Hull was obstructing my access to financial records (specifically expense reports).

Links to the files mentioned in that email are below. The sloppy scanning job which appears to intentionally obscure relevant portions of the reports shows the passive aggressive method in which David Hull gave the appearance of cooperation while quietly obstructing my access to expense reports.

In my original email to Kelly Lichter I explained in detail the problems with the expense reports provided to me at the time:

"The files I have attached are examples of information being obscured from view by overlaying a receipt on top of a report or stacking receipts on top of each other. See below for an explanation of the problem with each.

- **"David's Expense Report.pdf"** is an expense report offered as supporting detail for a \$110 check that David wrote to himself. It's not a large amount, but because he is the principal this transaction warrants a little extra scrutiny. The report that Susan provided obscures the following information:
  - The name of the person filing the report.
  - Receipts for the two \$25 line items (there is no date or dollar amount displayed).
- **"Example 2.pdf"** shows a stack of receipts, and I can only see the first one. What are the other receipts for?

- [“Example 3.pdf”](#) contains a receipt from Lowes for \$56, but there is another Amazon receipt behind it for \$221 which I cannot see. The Amazon receipt does not show what the purchase is for, and it does not show the shipping address. This purchase could be for anything and it could have been shipped anywhere.
- [“Example 4.pdf”](#) is just a mess. There are 5 receipts on top of an invoice of some kind which is obscured by the 5 receipts on top of it. I can’t make any sense of this.
- [“Example 5.pdf”](#) obscures the name of the person that the expense report is for
- [“Example 6.pdf”](#) is not so bad, but the receipt does obscure a large portion of the expense report. This one might pass an audit, but it is still not clear.
- [“Example 7.pdf”](#) contains 2 receipts for Toys ‘R Us, but the name of the person on the expense report is obscured as is the description which explains the business purpose.”

## Food For thought

Until now, I have attempted to make every effort to stick to topics that are provable and facts that can be documented. I did my best to avoid any speculation except in cases where speculation was unavoidable due to the obvious nature of the facts provided. There is so much left to be said; however, the following points are not so easily documented or provable. They are simply questions and observations that my wife and I have noted through the years. I think they are worth consideration, especially considering the fact that we were supporters of MCA well over a year before it opened, and nine of our children have attended the school, ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade.

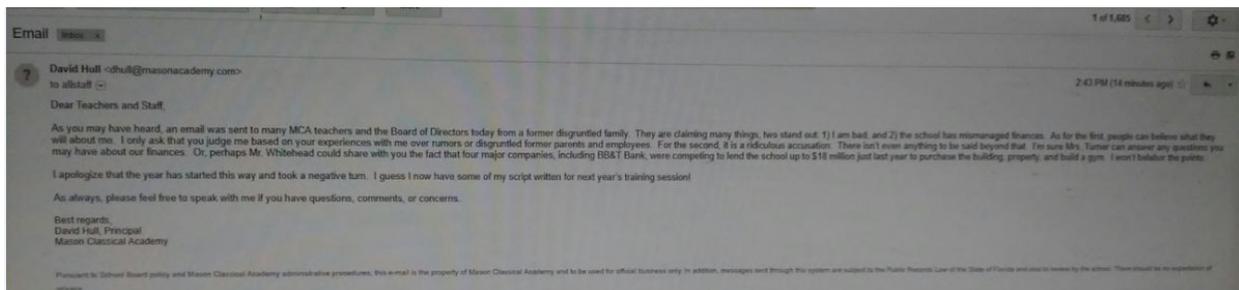
## Culture of Fear

There seems to be a culture of fear that pervades the school.

My eldest daughter who is now in college has been diagnosed with PTSD arising from trauma sustained during her time at MCA. Her trauma was primarily the result of having witnessed abuse of students and teachers on a regular basis. Now that she is in college, she finds herself jumpy and anxious because she is afraid that at any moment David Hull will open the door and come into the classroom to start yelling at the teacher or the class, or what was worse, engage in what she could only describe as “quiet harassment” of them all. At least three other of the ten seniors in her class are in counseling for the same thing. Several other former teachers have also confided the same.

Staff members are terrified to ever share any information regarding David Hull with the outside world. Whenever they want to pass information on to someone outside the school, they photograph or take screenshots of emails to send through text messages so their communication can not be tracked. They are afraid to simply forward an email to an outside address - that would be seen by David Hull and may threaten their jobs. Below is a photograph

of an email from David Hull to all staff members at MCA. This photograph was sent to me by a friend of a friend:



Here is the text of the email (I typed it out myself to make it easier to read):

*Dear Teachers and Staff,*

*As you may have heard, an email was sent to many MCA teachers and the Board of Directors today from a former disgruntled family. They are claiming many things, two stand out. 1) I am bad, and 2) the school has mismanaged finances. As for the first, people can believe what they will about me. I only ask that you judge me based on your experiences with me over rumors or disgruntled former parents and employees. For the second, it is a ridiculous accusation. There isn't even anything to be said beyond that. I'm sure Mrs. Turner can answer any questions you may have about our finances. Or perhaps Mr. Whitehead could share with you the fact that four major companies, including BB&T, were competing to lend the school up to \$18 million just last year to purchase the building, property and build a gym. I won't belabor the points.*

*I apologize that the year has started this way and took a negative turn. I guess I now have some of my script written for next year's training session!*

*As always, please feel free to speak with me if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.*

*Best regards,  
David Hull, Principal  
Mason Classical Academy*

Why would an employee of Mason Classical Academy be afraid to simply forward this email to someone outside of MCA? The only reason I can think of is that this person was afraid of being fired if it were discovered that this email was passed on to someone outside of the organization. This indicates that they feel like they are being watched and perhaps spied upon. This is not normal behavior and should be alarming to anyone.

There are other, disturbing examples of this culture of fear at the school, not only among families and teachers who are still at MCA, but even among those who have moved on. In the past six months or so, we have spoken to many families and teachers with heart-wrenching stories of maltreatment and emotional and verbal abuse at the hands of David Hull and even on occasion Kelly Lichter. Most were unwilling to share their stories publicly for fear of retaliation. Some still had children in the school and were afraid that their children would be punished for their coming forward. Others had already left the school but were afraid their friends still at the school would be punished for their actions. Current teachers were worried of not only losing their jobs, but had also been threatened with the complete destruction of their careers.

## Parental Involvement

Before MCA even opened, my wife and I were drawn to the school because its founders advocated a strong partnership between parents and teachers. We were told that as parents and co-educators of our children, we would always be welcome in the school. Parents would be free to drop in to eat lunch with their child and were encouraged to volunteer to help out in the classrooms. This did not last long. David Hull made it his mission very early on to almost completely eliminate parents from the school. Why? He also made sure to disband the PTCA, a group of parents that had worked tirelessly to fundraise and create a strong link between parents and teachers. Again, why?

## Building Purchase - Why Hasn't the \$18M Materialized?

David Hull has invested a tremendous amount of energy citing the fact that last year there were 4 different bonding companies competing to lend MCA \$18M to secure the purchase of the facilities they currently occupy. This information has been used to defend the school's financial management practices. David Bolduc pointed out on the Joe Whitehead Show that these companies classified MCA as "investment grade". However, MCA has not obtained ownership of the facilities and none of these so-called "offers" to loan money to the school have materialized. Why is that?

David Hull stated in an email to all parents of MCA that the reason that MCA has not been able to secure the purchase of the facilities is because the seller decided not to sell. Why did the seller decide not to sell? David Hull does not offer a reason. The only thing he had to say about the seller's reason for the seller's change of heart was in an email to all parents on 10/10/2018:

"The reason the school did not sign the papers on that offer was because the owner decided not to sell the building and land after all. This also speaks to the financial worth and stability of Mason Classical Academy."

So David Hull thinks that the seller's change of heart is testimony to their strong financial position. I can think of another reason the seller might change his mind: Perhaps MCA does not have sufficient resources to make a fair offer.

How much due diligence did these bonding companies really do and how many documents were falsified in the process? It's my understanding that the millions of dollars which were "offered" to the school were more of a sales pitch. Ironically, I think there would have been a lot more scrutiny of the school's finances and practices had the seller actually decided to sell.

And consider all the grand talk about the gymnasium and soccer field plans. No one hears about that anymore. The truth is, I heard that they are no longer able to afford this and can barely afford the small rent they pay on the vacant land next to the school. Are they in over their heads? And why?

## Testing

Anytime MCA is criticized for anything David Hull usually brings up MCA's excellent state testing scores as proof that the school is serving families and the community well. And indeed, MCA has flown to the top of the charts amazingly fast. But the question that need to be asked is how and why.

One of our experiences as a family at MCA was the insane increase in testing over the years. It began slowly, but last year, my 8th grader often had 14 tests and quizzes a week, and my 4th grader had 7. The classical education model is designed to cultivate a love of learning in its students. However, MCA was quickly becoming an institution for drill, drill, drill. My wife once mentioned to David Hull that the education offered at MCA was starting to look very much like the educational system mocked and condemned by Dickens in the novel *Hard Times*. Ironically, the book was taken out the curriculum.

There was also a huge push for the kids to practice for the state tests at home for homework. The homework load at MCA is already quite heavy. Adding this was a little over the top. One might argue that the IXL work was optional, however, many teachers rewarded students who put in the most time on the program.

I am fully aware that state tests are required since MCA is a public school, however, if I wanted my children to excel on the FSAs I would send them to a local public school. MCA is supposed to offer something different from those schools. When my wife and I first mentioned this to the administration, they assured us that they did not teach to the test. A few weeks later when my wife asked David Hull why our children were bringing home practice FSA tests if they did not "teach to the test", they suddenly changed their tune and had a young teacher send out an

email about the importance of standardized testing in classical schools. They were clearly being dishonest about it all along.

And most importantly, we have heard multiple stories of children being asked to leave because they were told by David Hull that they could not do well at MCA academically and so it would be best for them to move on. We have also heard many more stories about children who were struggling academically being forced out. Usually this took the form of disciplinary action. The students who did not perform well were punished far more severely than those who did. My own children would bring home stories of this at least once a week. They all did well academically and would be shocked at what they could get away with and what a student with a D average could get away with. The more spirited ones also seemed to be weeded out systematically. Since the punishment usually culminated in suspension or in the parents' having to come into the school for the day with their child, many of these families left. The extent of damage to the hearts and minds of these children is staggering.

Again, none of this can be proven, but I do believe that there is much harm going on within the walls of MCA. My hope is that the information and observations I have provided will prompt the CCPS, the DOE, and Hilldale to continue doing what they can to put an end to the suffering within the walls of MCA. Remember, it is the children who are suffering the most.